

ASHINGTON *NH*

Urban District Council.

ANNUAL REPORT

FOR 1897,

BY

ALEXANDER BLAIR, M.B.,

Medical Officer of Health.

Printed by order of the District Council.

HIRST:—

J. PEDELTY AND CO., PORTLAND PRINTING WORKS.

—
1898.

ASHINGTON

Urban District Council.

ANNUAL REPORT

FOR 1897,

BY

ALEXANDER BLAIR, M.B.,


Medical Officer of Health.

Printed by order of the District Council.

HIRST:—

J. PEDELTY AND CO., PORTLAND PRINTING WORKS.

—
1898.



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2017 with funding from
Wellcome Library

<https://archive.org/details/b28811665>

MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF COUNCIL,

I have pleasure in submitting my Second Annual Report.

During the 12 months of 1897, 178 deaths in all were registered as occurring in the district. Estimating the population at 10,000, this is equivalent to a general death rate of 17·8 per thousand, or exactly the same as that of 1896. Of the 178 deaths however, no fewer than 7 were due to "Premature Birth," 4 to "Accidental Injuries," and one to "Poison," self-administered, and in order to obtain a more correct idea of the actual death-rate from a public health point of view, those 12 ought in the estimation to be deducted from the total. Thus corrected, the mortality stands at 16·6 per 1,000 population.

This figure though fairly satisfactory, is in all probability an over-statement owing to the difficulty in the matter of an accurate Census of the population. At the beginning of the year, the estimate was 10,000, and as no correction has been possible since, I have adhered to this number, though owing to a large, (if irregular), influx of population throughout the year, together with a continuously high rate of birth, the actual number now is likely to be more correctly represented by 11,000.

I regret too that owing to the impossibility of dividing the district into separate areas of known population the following figures relate to the district as a whole, and we are unable to make a comparison between the health condition in the two wards of Ashington and Hirst which would have been more satisfactory. I trust this defect may be remedied before next report.

Of the 178 deaths occurring at all ages, 79 were infants under 12 months of age, indicating an infant mortality of 7·9 per 1,000 population, or almost half the entire death-rate. Of other age periods the highest number of deaths occurred between the ages of 1 year and under 5 years, viz: 32. Next in order comes the period of 25 years, and under 65 years, with 28 deaths. Following it is the period of 65 years and upwards comprising 24 deaths, and much lower than the others come the two periods of 5 years and under 15 years, and 15 years up to 25 years, with 5 deaths registered during the former, and 10 during the latter.

The following table shows the age mortality for each month.

Ashington Urban District. Age Mortality, 1897.

MONTH.	Males.	Fe- males.	All Ages.	Und. 1 yr.	1 to 5 yrs.	5 to 15 yrs.	15 to 25 yrs.	25 to 65 yrs.	65 yrs. & Ups.
January -	6	9	15	5	3	0	1	4	2
February -	4	1	5	2	2	0	1	0	0
March - -	6	8	14	9	1	0	1	1	2
April - -	10	6	16	8	5	0	1	1	1
May - -	9	7	16	7	4	0	1	2	2
June - -	6	8	14	4	3	2	1	2	2
July - -	3	14	17	5	2	2	0	2	6
August - -	7	11	18	12	3	0	0	2	1
September-	6	14	20	9	3	0	2	4	2
October -	6	10	16	8	2	0	0	3	3
November -	7	3	10	3	3	0	2	2	0
December -	10	7	17	7	1	1	0	5	3
Totals -	80	98	178	79	32	5	10	28	24

The most striking fact in this analysis is the high rate of infant mortality. This, as was the case in 1896, is with two exceptions a prominent feature in the Vital Statistics of every month throughout the year. Our unfortunate record in this respect is a matter very much to be regretted. It is all the more regrettable because I cannot think it is altogether quite unavoidable, though I am not aware of any general insanitary condition in the surroundings to which it can in any degree be attributed. I am strongly of opinion however that the explanation is to a considerable extent at least to be found in a cause which accounts for a number of preventable deaths, *ie*, improper feeding. Improper food causes Intestinal Derangement, Diarrhœa, and frequently Convulsions, and it is very significant that no less than 18 deaths among infants are attributed to Diarrhœa and Enteritis, (Inflammation of the Bowels), and 7 to Convulsions as a primary cause.

In his Annual Report for 1896, Dr. HEMBROUGH, County Medical Officer speaks very strongly on this subject, and his words are so appropriate, and I am convinced, so applicable to your district in particular that I quote them:—"As long as young children are brought up! upon food which it is impossible for them to digest, so long will Diarrhœa and other wasting diseases of children continue to claim their percentage of preventable deaths." Continuing, he says:—"When parents learn that it is as impossible to rear a young child properly upon 'boiley', sour apples, &c., as it would be to rear a young

mis-mash Barley Meal and Indian Corn. Diarrhœa among young

WASHINGTON URBAN DISTRICT.—CAUSES OF DEATH 1897.

Month.	All Causes.	Pneumonia.	Bronchitis.	Phthisis.	Marasmus.	Tuberc.	Meningitis.	Debility.	Dentition.	Senility.	Gastritis.	Asphyxia.	Convulsions.	Ovarian Cyst.	Measles.	Pertussis.	Enteric Fever.	Continued.	Purpura.	Enteritis.	Diabetes.	Nat. Causes.	Ict. Neonat.	Poliomyelitis.	Child Birth.	Cerebral Softg.	Injuries.	Heart Disease.	Malignant Disease.	Asthemia.	Apoplexy.	Purpura Convul.	Rheumatic Fever.	Uremia.	Premature Birth.	Diarrhoea.	Poison.	Hydrocephalus	Influenza.	Malformation.	Stomatitis.	Locomotor Ataxia.	Nephritis.	
January ..	15	1	3	1			1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1																												
February	5		1				1	1												1	1																							
March ..	14	2	4	1						2			1														1																	
April	16		2	1			1	2		1			1		5		1					1	1																					
May	16		2		1			1		1			1		3				1			1		1	1	1	1																	
June	14				1		2	1							2					1									1	2	1	1	1											
July	17		3	1			3	1		2												1								1		2		1	1	1								
August ..	18		1	1	1		2	3												3		1							1							3	1	1						
September	20		2	1	1			2		2							2			7				1															1	1				
October ..	16		1	1	1	1				1			1				1			1					1	1				1						2	1				1	1		
November	10		2	3	1				1				1																1															
December	17		2	3			2	1					1							1			1				1	1	1		1												2	
Totals	178	3	23	13	6	1	12	13	2	10	1	1	7	1	11	1	3	1	1	14	1	5	2	1	2	2	4	3	5	1	5	1	1	1	1	7	4	1	1	1	1	1	1	2
										Tubercular Diseases										Infectious Diseases																								
										32.										17.																								

pig upon Barley Meal and Indian Corn, Diarrhœa among young children will cease to cause the number of deaths under one year which it now does. I still hope that the Technical Education Committees of County Councils will see their way to impart valuable instruction by lectures on the hygiene of the house, and the feeding and nursing of children in health and disease. As in bee-keeping, so in the rearing of children, it is not expected that the old hands will consent to adopt many new ideas, but as in the former subject, Technical Education Committees have induced the new race of bee-keepers to relinquish the old methods of smothering the swarm in order to secure the honey, so will they succeed with the new race of mothers in imparting that knowledge of the necessities of infant life which will result in a diminution of the death-rate from improper feeding &c."

Appended is a table showing the causes of death in each month and the relative frequency of each.

It is satisfactory to notice that although the number of deaths from Consumption is higher by 3 than last year, the total number of deaths from Tubercular disease, (including Phthisis, Marasmus, Tabes Mesenterica, and Tubercular Meningitis), is only 32, as against 42 in 1896. The diminution is due to a much smaller percentage of deaths from Tubercular disease among children, a fact which in itself strongly supports the supposition that the high infant mortality is not altogether unavoidable.

The Zymotic mortality was 1·7 per 1,000 population, 17 deaths having occurred from infectious disease. Of these, 11 were due to Measles, 3 to Enteric Fever, and one each to Whooping Cough, Continued Fever, and Puerperal Fever respectively. Measles was prevalent in the district during the early part of the year to a greater extent than for several years previously, and occurring during cold weather, an unusually large percentage of the cases developed catarrhal complications and the mortality was high in consequence. Measles is a disease which causes a large number of deaths among children, but as I pointed out at the time, it is not popularly regarded as a serious ailment, and many instances came under my notice, of the most deplorable carelessness in the absence of any attempt at isolation of the sick, or avoidance of infection on the part of the healthy.

Of the notifiable infectious diseases 36 cases occurred during the year, viz : 20 of Enteric Fever, 9 of Continued Fever, 4 of Scarlatina, 2 of Erysipelas, and one of Puerperal Fever.

The distribution over the 12 months was according to the following table :

Ashington Urban District. Infectious Diseases Notified. 1897.

Month.	No.	Scarlet- ina.	Enteric Fever.	Erysip- elas.	Cont- inued Fever.	Puerp. Fever.
January -	2	2	0	0	0	0
February	1	0	1	0	0	0
March -	1	0	1	0	0	0
April - -	2	0	1	0	1	0
May - -	2	0	0	1	0	1
June - -	0	0	0	0	0	0
July - -	0	0	0	0	0	0
August -	4	0	1	1	2	0
September	7	0	6	0	1	0
October -	15	1	9	0	5	0
November	1	0	1	0	0	0
December	1	1	0	0	0	0
Totals -	36	4	20	2	9	1

It will be seen that Typhoid Fever was somewhat prevalent in September and October, but I am unable to state any special local cause accounting for the outbreak. The epidemic was too limited to be supposed to be due to anything wrong with the water or milk supply, but in view of the fact that the disease was present to a considerable extent in some neighbouring districts before its appearance in yours, and bearing in mind the constant intercommunication continually going on between the inhabitants of adjoining mining localities, it is more than probable that the affection was imported. Every precaution was taken to prevent or limit the spread of the disease. In all cases disinfectants were supplied and the houses subsequently fumigated, and I have to acknowledge my indebtedness to the Sanitary Inspector for the promptitude and energy with which he carried out every sanitary precaution attending himself personally to each individual case. In three instances the bedding etc., made use of by the infected was destroyed, and but for the mildness of the majority of the cases, such destruction would necessarily have been much greater. Large Bills were printed and posted in conspicuous places warning against the sale or giving away of infected articles and the exposure of infected persons. The Ashington Coal Co. also gave every assistance in keeping down the spread of Infection by the liberal use of disinfectants and carefully attending to the removal of ashpit contents.

The number of Births for the year was 449, (226 Males and 223 Females), indicating a birth-rate of 44·9 per 1,000 population. In 1896 the proportion was 45·1 per 1,000.

Ashington Urban District. Births, 1897.

Month.	Number.	Males.	Females.	Rate.
January -	32	15	17	3·2
February -	15	9	6	1·5
March - -	29	18	11	2·9
April - - -	36	16	20	3·6
May - - -	44	24	20	4·4
June - - -	42	22	20	4·2
July - - -	45	21	24	4·5
August - -	52	23	29	5·2
September -	38	19	19	3·8
October- -	43	19	24	4·3
November -	35	20	15	3·5
December -	38	20	18	3·8
Totals -	449	226	223	44·9 per 1000 population

Several most important Sanitary Improvements have been effected in the district during the year. Principally among these may be mentioned :—

1st. An extension of the public lighting system until there are now 68 Lamps in the district.

2nd. The planting of trees, and generally putting in order as a pleasure ground of the field known as the public playing ground.

3rd. A Branch Sewer to Hirst Main Sewer thus doing away completely with the nuisance of the North Seaton Road open Sewer.

4th. Grates put in under the water taps in the Hirst back streets to carry away spilt water, with the result that those streets are now in a fairly dry condition instead of being as before almost continuous puddles.

5th. A Drain with 9 Grates laid in Front St. Hirst for the removal of rain water, &c.

6th. Channelling of the roadsides for the better conveyance of storm water to the Grates.

It is pleasing to record that out of 187 Nuisance Notices served during the year the nuisance was abated in 185 cases.

Besides those improvements already completed the Council have in consideration the question of an Infectious Diseases' Hospital a committee having been appointed for that purpose.

There is also at present under discussion, the alteration of the Hirst Market Place Sewer and the insertion of Fire Plugs.

One requirement I would respectfully suggest for the consideration of the Sanitary Authority as likely to be of the greatest utility and importance in the district is the adoption of Model Byelaws such as recommended by the Local Government Board.

Another obvious requirement which would conduce very much to the comfort and welfare of foot passengers in the district, is the use of a Metal Sludge Cart for carrying away the liquid filth of the streets which is so very marked a feature especially of our thoroughfares during wet weather.

In conclusion, gentlemen, I beg to tender my most sincere thanks for the great consideration and courtesy you have extended to me throughout the year.

Your obedient Servant,

ALEXANDER BLAIR.

January 15th, 1898.

